



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

Manual:	CP&P	Child Protection & Permanency	Effective
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Chapter:	C	Case Oversight and Management	3-2-2018
Subchapter:	4	Locating a Missing Child	
Issuance:	300	Missing Child	

Purpose:

This issuance provides critical information to caregivers, Workers, and other relevant individuals to assist them in knowing what to do when a child under the care, custody, and/or supervision of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency becomes missing.

Authority:

- Title 30 at N.J.S.A. 30:4C-3.7
- The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, PL 113-183

Policy:

A) Determining if a Child is Missing

A child in out of home placement or subject to supervision in his or her own home is considered “missing” if his or her whereabouts are unknown to the placement provider and Division and cannot be ascertained by cursory investigation.

B) Resource Caregiver/Non-Family Based Placement/Treatment Obligations When Child is Missing

When a child is determined to be missing, the caregiver must notify CP&P immediately regarding the circumstances surrounding the child's disappearance. The Worker must inform his or her Supervisor of the missing status of the child and begin location procedures outlined in this policy. The caretaker must also immediately inform CP&P upon the return of the child.

C) Notification of Missing Status

Once notified that a child in out of home placement has been determined to be missing, the Worker must:

- Notify Local Law Enforcement or the New Jersey State Police within required timeframes if the caretaker has not already done so, and provide the information specified on CP&P [Form 2-3](#) within 24 hours.¹
- Notify any DAG assigned to the case by the close of the business day. The DAG informs the court and the child's law guardian of the child's missing status.
- Notify the child's parent or legal guardian by the close of the business day. The Worker also informs the parent or legal guardian of the circumstances surrounding the child's missing status and solicits assistance from the parent or guardian in trying to locate the child (e.g., has the child tried to contact you, who are the child's close friends, etc.)
- Notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children within 24 hours and provide the information specified on CP&P [Form 2-3](#).

D) Return of the Child and Debriefing

Every child determined to be missing for any length of time must be interviewed by the Worker after being located or returned. The Worker debriefs the child and documents the information learned including what factors led to the child's missing episode, where the child was staying, who the child was with, under what circumstances was the child there and for how long, and whether there is

¹ If the Worker encounters resistance in reporting a missing youth, or otherwise feels the involvement of the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) is required, the Worker contacts the Missing Person's Unit at (609) 963-6900. Do not use the NJSP 800 number.

indication of possible human trafficking. Efforts shall be undertaken to address any precipitating factors related to the child's missing episode.

E) Human Trafficking Involvement and Referral to Appropriate Services

If the debriefing process indicates that a child has been involved with or placed at risk of involvement with sex or labor trafficking, youth will be immediately referred to appropriate treatment and evaluation services.

F) Documentation into NJ SPIRIT


The Worker will document all activities into NJ SPIRIT to keep the record current (e.g., contacting law enforcement, NCMEC, relatives, schools etc.)

Procedures:

A) Missing Child Reporting and Management Procedures

Any child whose whereabouts are unknown (runaway, abducted, or absconded) is considered to be a missing child and the following steps must be taken.

Worker	Timeframe
If the missing notification begins at SCR, the screener notifies the Area Director and Assistant Area Director via internal alerts.	By the close of business or the end of the screener's shift during non-business hours.
The Screening Worker advises the resource parent or out-of-home placement provider to contact the local police.	Immediately if the child is age 12 or younger and/or at high risk* . Up to 2 hours if the child is 13 or older, willingly left care, and is not at high risk (but efforts to locate the child must be actively underway during this time).
When the Worker receives the missing notification, the Worker makes sure the child has been reported missing to	Immediately upon learning the child is missing.

<p>law enforcement. The worker must obtain both the police report number and the name of the law enforcement agency contacted, from the person who reported the child missing to law enforcement.</p> <p>Contact the child's school to inform that he or she is currently missing.</p> <p>Contact the DAG.</p> <p>Inform the parent/guardian of the child's missing status.</p> <p>Notify relatives, service providers, etc., to advise them of the situation, and to see if they can provide information to help locate the child.</p>	<p>Immediately upon learning the child is missing.</p> <p>By the close of business upon learning the child is missing.</p> <p>By the close of business upon learning the child is missing.</p> <p>Within 24 hours upon learning the child is missing.</p>
Document all work in NJ SPIRIT.	By the next business day upon learning that the child is missing.
Update Missing person Information in NJ SPIRIT once it has been determined that the child is missing. (Go to the address management window to document the child in missing status and also document on contact activity note.)	By the next business day upon obtaining a report number from law enforcement.
Contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)	 <p>24-Hour HOTLINE 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)</p> <p>National Center for Missing & Exploited Children</p>

	Within 24 hours of the child being missing.
Advise the parent/guardian that the child has been returned or is safe at an established location.	By the close of business upon learning of the child's return.
Advise the law enforcement entity that initially took the report, NCMEC, and any other relevant parties that the child has been returned or is safe at an established location.	By the next business day of the child returning.

Note: *High Risk: Any child age 12 or younger; or any child (no matter the age) who is believed to be with someone who may harm him/her; or any child who may be at risk of harming him/herself; or any child who has a known medical condition or disability, or has a history of human trafficking.*

Key Terms (Definitions):

- **Parent:** This term means a birth, legal parent, putative father, or legal guardian.
- **Worker:** For the purposes of this policy issuance. Worker means the assigned Worker or in the absence of the Worker, the assigned covering Worker.
- **Missing Child:** This term refers to a person younger than **18** years of age and whose whereabouts are unknown to his or her caretaker, parent, and guardian or responsible party, whether the circumstances are unknown or he/she is believed to have left the placement voluntarily.
- **Caregiver:** This term refers to a person with legal custody or other person who has assumed full time custody of a child, but does not include a parent.
- **Search:** This term means the activities undertaken to locate a missing person.
- **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:** Established in 1984, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® is the leading nonprofit organization in the U.S. working with law enforcement, families and the professionals who serve them on issues related to missing and sexually exploited

children. As part of its Congressional authorization, NCMEC has created a unique public and private partnership to build a coordinated, national response to the problem of missing and sexually exploited children, establish a missing children hotline, and serve as the national clearinghouse for information related to these issues.

Forms and Attachments:

- CP&P [Form 2-3](#), Missing Child Information Sheet